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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 AID-20 OMB-01 SR-02 ORM-03

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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5151

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 2931

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: SREF, CB

SUBJECT: INFLUX OF REFUGEES IN PROVINCES

SUMMARY: DURING LAST SEVERAL WEEKS A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF KHMER VILLAGERS HAVE FLED FROM KHMER COMMUNITIS (KC) CONTROL INTO AREAS CONTROLLED BY THE GKR IN KOMPONG THOM, SIEM REAP, BATTAMBANG AND PURSAT. TOTAL NUMBER OF VILLAGERS INVOLVED IS ESTIMATED AT OVER 27,500 PEOPLE. THIS IS THE FIRST MAJOR EXODUS OF REFUGEES FROM KC HELD AREAS SINCE THE WAR BEGAN AND IS SIGNIFICANT ON TWO COUNTS, FIRST THAT THE PEASANTS CLEARLY WERE MOTIVATED TO LEAVE THE ENEMY-HELD AREAS AND SECONDLY THAT THE KC WERE UNABLE TO MUSTER ENOUGH STRENGTH TO HOLD THEM IN PLACE. WITH FEW EXCEPTIONS, THE GENERAL HEALTH OF THE NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES IS POOR AND MANY SUFFER FROM UNDER-NOURISHMENT AND DISEASE. U.S. SUPPORTED VOLAGS ARE DISTRIBUTING EMERGENCY RELIEF AND ERECTING TEMPORARY SHELTER. PLANS ALSO BEING DRAWN-UP WITH GKR OFFICIALS FOR MORE PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. KOMPONG THOM. SINCE EARLY FEBRUARY, PROVINCIAL FORCES HAVE MOUNTED FOUR SEPARATE OPERATIONS FROM THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL INTO SURROUNDING KC TERRITORY. THE LARGEST SWEEP FOLLOWED ROUTE 6

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AND REACHED TOWN OF STONG, 55 KILOMETERS NORTHWEST OF CAPITAL. AN ESTIMATED 22,500 VILLAGES LEFT KC CONTROL ON THEIR OWN VOL-

ITION AND FOLLOWED FREINDLY TROOPS INTO KOMPONG THOM. ALL ARE NOW LIVING IN MAKESHIFT CAMPS AROUND THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL. THE HEALTH OF NEW RFUGEES IS ONLY FAIR AND MANY OF THE CHILDREN APPEAR TO BE UNDER-NOURISHED. PROVINCIAL HEALTH OFFICIALS ALSO REPORT A HIGH INCIDENCE OF MALARIA AND DYSENTERY. FEW REFUGEES WERE ABLE TO BRING IN MORE THAN SOME CATTLE, A FEW CARTS AND MEAGRE POSSESSIONS; MOST BROUGHT IN LITTLE OR NO FOOD.

2. SIEM REAP. DURING SAME TIMEFRAME, SIEM REAP FORCES ALSO MOUNTED A SERIES OF OPERATIONS WEST FROM PROVINCIAL CAPITAL INTO SOT NIKUM DISTRICT AT DISTANCES UP TO 22 KILOMETERS. THOUGH KC HAD MOVED MANY VILLAGERS INTO HINTERLANDS, GOVERNMENT TROOPS STILL SUCCEEDED IN LIBERATING 1,000. AS IN THE CASE OF KOMPONG THOM, THE HEALTH OF THE REFUGEES IS ONLY FAIR AND MALARIA IS WIDESPREAD. MANY REFUGEES HAVE COME IN WITH LITTLE MORE THAN THE CLOTHES ON THEIR BACKS. THE PROVINCE CHIEF REPORTED THAT THE 1,000 REFUGEES BROUGHT IN ONLY LIMITED AMOUNTS OF PADDY.

3. BATTAMBANG. IN EARLY FEBRUARY GOVERNMENT TROOPS UNDER COMMAND OF THMAR PUOK PROVINCE CHIEF LAUNCHED MULTI-BATTALION OPERATION TO AREA SOUTH OF ROUTE 6 NEAR SIEM-REAP-BATTAMBANG BORDER (PREAH-NET-PREAH DISTRICT). IN ALL, 600 FAMILIES FOLLOWED THE TROOPS BACK TO GOVERNMENT POSITIONS ALONG ROUTE 6. UNLIKE REFUGEES IN KOMPONG THOM AND SIEM REAP, THESE REFUGEES APPEAR TO BE WELL-FED AND IN GOOD HEALTH. MANY ALSO BROUGHT IN PERSONAL POSSESSIONS ALONG WITH ESTIMATED 6000 BAGS OF UNMILLED RICE.

4. PURSAT. ACCORDING TO PURSAT PROVINCE CHIEF, 1,000 KHMER VILLAGERS IN KC HELD TERRITORY TO NORTH OF PROVINCIAL CAPITAL REVOLTED AND FOUGHT THEIR WAY TO THE GOVERNMENT LINES.

5. LIFE UNDER THE KC. A KHMER-SPEAKING USAID OFFICER HAS INTERVIEWED MANY OF RECENTLY ARRIVED REFUGEES IN KOMPONG THOM AND SIEM REAP. THE FOLLOWING IS COMPIATION OF COMMENTS ABOUT LIFE ON THE OTHER SIDE.

A. REFUGEES COMPLAINED IN PARTICULAR ABOUT LACK OF FOOD. IN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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KC AREAS, ALL CROPS HAD TO BE GIVEN TO INSURGENT ORGANIZED CO-OPERATIVES. PERIODICALLY THE COOPERATIVES REDISTRIBUTED SOME FOOD BACK TO THE VILLAGERS BUT ALWAYS LESS THAN WAS PROVIDED. SINCE KC HAVE FORCIBLY RELOCATED MANY VILLAGERS INTO THE HINTERLANDS, MANY WERE FORCED TO LIVE IN HASTILY THROWN UP SHANTIES. DISEASE WAS WIDESPREAD BUT MEDICAL ATTENTION WAS REPORTEDLY ALMOST NON-EXISTENT.

B. ENEMY CONTROL WAS HARSH AND ALL PERVASIVE. CRITICISM WAS NOT TOLERATED AND THOSE WHO DID COMPLAIN WERE IN MANY CASES

SENT TO THE "HIGHER ORGANIZATION" AND NEVER SEEN AGAIN. NO PRIVATE ENTERPRISE WAS ALLOWED. ALL RELIGIOUS CEREMONIES AND FESTIVALS WERE BANNED. BESIDES DEPRIVATIONS, VILLAGERS HAD TO CONTEND WITH CONTINUING KC HARASSMENT. MANY ABLE-BODIED MEN AND BOYS ARE TAKEN BY THE ENEMY AND FORCED TO SERVE AS SOLDIERS OR TO SUPPORT ENEMY MILITARY UNITS. THOSE VILLAGERS WHO WERE TOO OLD TO WORK WERE PUT ON LIMITED DIETS AND CRITICIZED FOR BEING NONPRODUCTIVE. YOUNG KHMER MEN WERE NOT ALLOWED TO JOIN PAGODAS AND THOSE MONKS STILL REMAINING WERE FORCED TO WORK IN FIELDS AS LABORERS.

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C. IN GENERAL REFUGEES WERE BITTER AGAINST KC AND SEEMED SATISFIED TO BE UNDER GOVERNMENT CONTROL AGAIN.

6. PRESENT RELIEF EFFORTS AND FUTURE RESETTLEMENT PLANS.

A. KOMPONG THOHSM VOLAGS HAVE PROVIDED THE BULK OF EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE TO NEW REFUGEES IN KOMPONG THOM. SINCE FEBRUARY, CRS HAS USED AIR AMERICA AIRCRAFT TO TRANSPORT 12 TONS OF RICE, 1 TON OF SALT, 7 TONS OF CSM, PLUS VARIED AMOUNTS OF CLOTHES, BLANKETS, MATS, AND MOSQUITO NETS. THE GKR IS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF AUGMENTING THE REGULAR AIRLIFT OF RICE INTO KOMPONG THOM. A CRS REPRESENTATIVE HAS VISITED KOMPONG THOM ON A REGULAR BASIS TO OVERSEE DISTRIBUTION OF RELIEF SUPPLIES AND WILL

BE ASSIGNED THERE PERMANENTLY IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WVRO IS ALSO ACTIVE IN KOMPONG THOM DISTRIBUTING FOOD AND PUTTING UP HOUSING. SINCE THE PRESENT MASSIVE RELIEF EFFORT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CONTINUE FOR SEVERAL MORE MONTHS, USAID AND VILAGS HAVE BEEN WORKING CLOSELY WITH MINISTER THACH TOAN TO INCREASE GKR ROLE IN RELIEF EFFORT. ON FEBRUARY 23, THACH TOAN AND REPRESENTATIVES OF VOLAGS VISITED KOMPONG THOM TO ESTIMATE TOTAL RELIEF REQUIREMENTS AND TO SET UP A COMBINED GKR-VOLAG PROGRAM.

BESIDES DIRECTING MILITARY OPERATIONS INTO KC-HELD AREAS, THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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KOMPONG THOM PROVINCE CHIEF HAS ALSO SUCCESSFULLY EXPANDED DEFENSIVE PERIMETER OF THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL. THERE IS REPORTEDLY ENOUGH RICE LAND TO SUPPORT ALL NEW REFUGEES. PLANS TO DISTRIBUTE THIS LAND TO INDIVIDUAL REFUGEE FAMILIES ARE BEING DRAWN UP. BOTH CRS AND WVRO HAVE PLEDGED TO SUPPORT THE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM. IT IS HOPED THAT MOST NEW REFUGEES FAMILIES WILL BE ABLE TO GET A CROP IN DURING THE UPCOMING RAINY SEASON. WE ARE PREPARED TO GIVE ALL ASSISTANCE NEEDED.

B. SIEM REAP AND BATTAMBANG. CARE DIRECTOR HAROLD SILLCOX HAS AGREED TO ASSIST WITH THE RELIEF AND RESETTLEMENT OF ALL NEWLY ARRIVED REFUGEES IN BOTH SIEM REAP AND BATTAMBANG. CARE HAS ALREADY DISTRIBUTED FOOD AND OTHER RELIEF SUPPLIES TO ALL 1,000 REFUGEES IN SIEM REAP AND IS WORKING WITH PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES ON A PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT PLAN. (PROVINCE CHIEF HAS SET ASIDE FOR REFUGEE USE 1000 HECTARES OF LAND NEAR THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL). TWO CARE REPRESENTATIVES WILL GO TO SIEM REAP NEXT WEEK IN AN ATTEMPT TO LAUNCH A RESETTLEMENT EFFORT WITHIN A MONTH. CARE ALSO PLANS SHORTLY TO MAKE A TRIP TO BATTAMBANG IN ORDER TO ASSESS RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR 600 NEW REFUGEE FAMILIES NEAR THE BATTAMBANG-SIEM REAP BORDER. (IOG HAS DISTRIBUTED SOME EMERGENCY RELIEF SUPPLIES TO THESE REFUGEES BUT APART FROM RESETTLEMENT, LITTLE MORE RELIEF IS NEEDED SINCE THEY APPEAR TO BE QUITE WELL OFF.)

C. PURSAT. WVRO HAS EXPRESSED AN INTEREST IN 1,000 RECENTLY ARRIVED REFUGEES IN PURSAT. SINCE THE GOVERNOR HAS RICE LAND AVAILABLE FOR THESE REFUGEES, WVRO HOPES TO BE ABLE TO ASSIST THE GOVERNMENT TO QUICKLY RESETTLE THEM.

7. SINCE KHMER PROVINCIAL REPORTS INDICATED WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION IN KC AREAS, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT FUTURE GKR MILITARY OPERATIONS WILL ENABLE OTHER KHMER VILLAGERS PRESENTLY UNDER KC CONTROL TO RETURN TO THE GKR-HELD AREAS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE PROVINCIAL REFUGEE SITUATION CLOSELY AND REPORT ANY NEW DEVELOPMENTS.
ENDERS

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